



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
DARRELL V. MCGRAW, JR.  
CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION  
1-800-368-8808 or 304-558-8986

# Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: Tammy Arthur, West Virginia Attorney  
General's Office, 1-800-368-8808  
Bob Harris, AARP, 304-776-1048  
John Ruddick, Verizon, 344-7234

## **"Operation STRIKE Back"**

### **HELPS EDUCATE AND PROTECT WEST VIRGINIA SENIORS FROM TELEMARKETING AND MAIL FRAUD CRIMINALS**

Continuing what has already proven to be an extremely successful program, the West Virginia Attorney General's Office, the West Virginia State Police, AARP, TRIAD of West Virginia, Inc., the United States Postal Service and Verizon are sponsoring a ninth "Operation STRIKE Back."

In a proactive effort to educate and protect West Virginians and reduce the number of telemarketing and mail fraud victims, "Operation STRIKE Back - North Western West Virginia" will use more than 150 volunteers from senior organizations throughout the state in a "reverse boiler room" operation. The volunteers will begin calling victims and potential victims in North Western West Virginia at 10:00 a.m., today, October 24, 2002, from the Holiday Inn in Parkersburg.

West Virginians contacted through "Operation STRIKE Back" will be informed of the various forms of fraud: fake charities, sweepstakes prizes, investment opportunities and even the possibility of obtaining money lost in an earlier scam. They will be advised of ways to protect themselves and, if they desire additional information, it will be sent to them.

Operation STRIKE Back has held several such meetings: Charleston and Martinsburg in 1999; Wheeling, Beckley and Huntington in 2000; Bluefield and Logan in 2001; and Clarksburg in 2002, all of which were tremendously successful. More than 1,200 volunteers from senior organizations throughout the state participated in these "reverse boiler room" operations in which they contacted approximately 40,000 victims and potential victims throughout West Virginia. More than 90% of those contacted by the volunteers found the information helpful and rated the boiler room effort a success. West Virginians that were contacted were advised of ways to protect themselves from telephone and mail fraud and were sent additional information if they requested it. More than 14,500 packets of information have been sent.

"Telemarketing fraud is a multi-billion dollar criminal enterprise that threatens the economic security of older West Virginians," said Attorney General McGraw. "These criminals must learn they are not welcome in West Virginia and that their schemes and scams will not be tolerated."

"We applaud TRIAD and the West Virginia Attorney General's Office for helping the most vulnerable in our community understand the dangers that swindlers and scam artists pose," said John Ruddick, Director of Government Operations, West Virginia. "Verizon is proud to be a part of this very worthwhile endeavor."

In a typical "boiler room," swindlers call victims using "mooch" or "sucker" lists of consumers who have previously fallen for their fraudulent schemes. Such lists are sold on the black market.

In today's "Reverse Boiler Room," volunteers will contact senior West Virginians in Wood, Jackson, Calhoun, Wirt, Pleasants, and Ritchie counties whose names appear on lists obtained by the West Virginia Attorney General's Office as a result of lawsuits filed against telemarketers in an effort to stop telemarketing and mail fraud.

Representatives from each of the cooperating agencies, Darrell V. McGraw, Jr., West Virginia Attorney General; John Ruddick, Verizon of West Virginia; Bill Davis, AARP State President; and Julie Lejeune of AARP, will be available for individual interview opportunities throughout the day. Also participating will be representatives from the offices of local prosecutors, state police, sheriff departments and municipalities.

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